



## 2020 Chief FOIA Officer Report

Millennium Challenge Corporation

Thomas G. Hohenthanner, Deputy Vice President, Deputy General Counsel, and Chief FOIA Officer

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) applies the “presumption of openness” by effectively utilizing transparency, public participation, and collaboration to form a cornerstone of open government in the agency. MCC makes every effort to inform the public by making its data public and accessible. MCC proactively posts its data on its country programs on its website, as well as selections of publicly available resources on countries being considered for assistance, active programs, post-closeout evaluations, information on procurement opportunities, and reports and documents published in the Federal Register.

To ensure that the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is administered in the “spirit of cooperation,” MCC’s decisions regarding the public release of its information are based on a presumption of disclosure. If information is not precluded from release under the FOIA exemptions or other laws, then MCC works to disclose the information. In addition to the FOIA, many of MCC’s decisions are guided by the MCC Open Government Plan, MCC Policy on Access to Materials, and the MCC Disclosure Review Board. This guidance is described as follows:

- MCC Open Government Plan outlines information the agency makes publicly available and describes priorities for new initiatives planned to further improve access to MCC information.
- MCC Policy on Access to Materials helps MCC staff determine whether a document should be released to the public while maintaining the highest standards for sensitive information.
- The Disclosure Review Board allows for independent evaluations to document the outputs, outcomes, and impact of MCC’s grant programs. MCC’s grants often involve large-scale survey data collection efforts that are of great interest to the public.

MCC has six employees who assist with the FOIA program. The *Program Officer* is the most dedicated resource to the FOIA program by utilizing about 70% of his time to the program. The *Public Liaison* assists the program by addressing concerns about the service that requesters have received and reducing delays, increasing transparency, and assisting in the resolution of disputes. The *Attorney Advisor* addresses legal issues and conducts a legal sufficiency review of the requests. The *Appeals Officer* handles all appeals from initial decisions. In direct correlation with MCC’s efforts to improve efficiency and responsiveness to requests received, two additional employees from the Office of the Chief Information Officer lend their specialized expertise to assist in processing requests and conducting electronic

document searches through the use of information technology. All members of MCC FOIA program office have been trained on the FOIA and its guidelines in order to ensure a presumption of openness.

MCC's distinct process to review records for discretionary release includes analyzing each requested document for potential discretionary release where FOIA exemptions may be applied. In addition, MCC pursues a policy of proactive disclosure to ensure information is generally accessible to the public without the need to submit a FOIA request. Not only are MCC's compacts and threshold program agreements published in full on its public website, MCC also includes the core program documentation and the results of those programs as they progress.

Currently, MCC is in the process of procuring an electronic system to process FOIA requests, track FOIA data and statistics, and charge fees, where appropriate. Many other federal agencies utilize an electronic system for managing FOIA requests and MCC has opted to explore this method to modernize its processing procedures and allow for a more efficient method of tracking data.